NOVA SCOTIA

Emergency Measures Organization

2004 Annual Report

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Emergency Measures Organization (Nova Scotia)

Forward

After the flooding and hurricane challenges of 2003, the staff of EMO(NS) looked forward to 2004 as an opportunity to collectively catch our breath and address the current disaster financial assistance programs. Our optimism was short-lived; however, with the arrival of what has become known as "White Juan" in February 2004, when almost 100cm of snow fell on the province.

"White Juan" made history for causing the first province-wide state of emergency in Nova Scotia. It seems almost unrealistic that a snow storm would demand such action when floods, hurricanes and plane crashes had not, but it was real enough. We would like to acknowledge the timely response of our mutual aid partners from the State of Maine and the Province of New Brunswick through their provision of snow-clearing resources. This was the first occasion that the provisions of the International Emergency Management Compact were activated and the process certainly worked as intended. It is great to have neighbours who can be counted upon.

November 14, 2004 provided EMO(NS) with another reminder that our weather patterns are changing. Freezing rain, wet snow, and high winds produced power outages in many areas of the province and at this time, the debriefing process continues.

Effective February 7, 2005, there was a "changing of the guard" at EMO(NS) as Craig MacLaughlan replaced me as the Executive Director. Craig retired as an R.C.M.P. Superintendent to accept the position, and my best wishes go with him for the future.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to our dedicated EMO(NS) Team of problem solvers, whose ability and attitude has brought credit to the Province of Nova Scotia.

Respectfully submitted,

M.R. Lester
Executive Director EMO(NS)
(Retired)

A Message from the Executive Director

I wish to thank Mike Lester for his years of dedicated service to our province and its people. Mike has guided Nova Scotia through many large scale emergencies and events with professionalism and compassion. All of us here at EMO wish Mike and his family the best in his retirement.

I am extremely proud to be part of an organization that has shown such leadership in emergency preparedness in Canada. Nova Scotia remains one of the most prepared provinces in this country. This is a reputation I take very seriously and intend to enhance during my time as Executive Director.

The 30 years of experience I gained as a member of the RCMP and, in particular, as the critical incident officer for both Nova Scotia and Newfoundland & Labrador, prepared me well for this challenging new role.

There continues to be many more opportunities within emergency management in Nova Scotia in which we can continue to grow as an organization:

- The development of a provincial early warning system to alert citizens of pending dangers;
- Enhancing training opportunities to mitigate damage, death or injury to the population;
- Securing appropriate funding levels within the provincial and federal governments for the Joint Emergency Preparedness Program (JEPP) and the Disaster Financial Assistance Agreement (DFAA); and
- The establishment of provincial and municipal contingency planning and evaluation for dealing with Hazardous Materials and Chemical, Biological Radiological and Nuclear events.

We are all extremely fortunate to be able to expand upon the strong foundation Mike has built. Mike, again, all the best to you and your family in your well-deserved retirement years.

I look forward to meeting with all of you in the months to come.

Craig MacLaughlan
Executive Director EMO(NS)

2004 - Let It Snow

February

This year brought two significant winter storms to Nova Scotia. On February 19th, a major snow storm resulted in the Honourable Ernest Fage, minister responsible for the Emergency Measures Act, declaring the first-ever provincial state of emergency. This lasted until February 22nd. During this time, EMO issued 12 public information announcements on everything from the particulars surrounding the provincial state of emergency to the closure of government offices.

This storm closed most major highways and created dangerous road conditions. This was the first time the International Emergency Management Compact was activated. Nova Scotia greatly benefitted from the snow clearing resources from the State of Maine and the Province of New Brunswick.

November

The EMO operations centre was activated again on November 14th. This early winter storm brought up to 50 centimetres of snow and caused major power outages and treacherous driving conditions. Four local states of emergency were declared throughout the province.

EMO coordinated the emergency and relief services of more than a dozen agencies and departments, including The Department of Community Services and the Canadian Red Cross. Thirty-five "comfort centres" around Nova Scotia were established, primarily in fire stations and schools. Throughout the event, EMO worked closely with its partners to ensure safety was a top priority. Announcements were issued concerning food safety and precautions with dealing with power outages.

Ground Search and Rescue

The Nova Scotia volunteer Ground Search and Rescue (GSAR) program continues to provide a valuable service to the people of Nova Scotia, EMO (NS), police authorities and municipal emergency measures organizations.

GSAR consists of 1,650 dedicated volunteers, forming 24 teams, plus two civilian dog teams throughout the province. Each team has an elected association with a Director. The association governs the teams and provides assistance with the latest technologies, training and current events from the National Ground Search and Rescue Council.

Lost or missing person incidents are police investigations to which the volunteer search and rescue teams provide a professional service. Lost or missing person 'call outs' are categorized as children, hunters, fishers, despondents, outdoor enthusiasts and others. Despondents include Alzheimer patients, elopements from special care facilities and multiple forms of depression.

There is an ever-increasing trend to utilize the well-trained and equipped volunteer GSAR teams. Teams are consistently providing human resource support to police departments for evidence searching in major crimes. Some have traffic control training and are called upon in times of flooding, major fires and snowstorms.

Municipal governments quickly call upon GSAR volunteers to help with evacuations, registration and inquiries, transportation, communication and flood watches when natural emergencies require prompt coordinated responses.

Statistical information supporting these responses in 2004 is as follows:

2,097 GSAR volunteers dedicated 35,499 hours to searching for 88 lost persons, providing assistance to police and municipal EMO's.

Lost persons:

- Children 12
- Hunters 14
- Fishers 7
- Despondents 20
- Outdoor enthusiasts 24
- Others 11

March 2004 brought another "first" for the Nova Scotia GSAR with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Nova Scotia Ground Search and Rescue Association, EMO (NS) and Parks Canada. This MOU is the first of its kind in Canada.

Although the people involved in this program are civilian volunteers, they are professionally trained in search and rescue, search and rescue management, the incident command system, communications, logistics, boat safety, off highway vehicle use, first aid, CPR, wilderness first aid and other important areas. The teams fundraise as much as possible to support their existence, as well as the ever-changing needs and trends within the industry.

Search and rescue prevention is one of the latest trends and most of the provincial teams are heavily involved with school talks, prevention seminars, safety training, public awareness bulletins and broadcasts. EMO (NS) provides media relations training to team members.

The National Search and Rescue Secretariat is chairing a workshop on radio interoperability within the search and rescue community. All provinces and territories, as well as search and rescue participants, are represented. A proposal has now been forwarded to Industry Canada to identify a common channel to be used for search and rescue nationally.

SARSCENE 2004

Sarscene is an international conference and trade show recognizing search and rescue efforts from around the world. The conference is a forum for governments, professional search and rescue persons, police agencies, military and civilian volunteers to network, understand and improve their search and rescue skills. Nova Scotia has long been recognized as a leader in the search and rescue world.

This year's conference was held in Calgary, AB. The Nova Scotia Ground Search and Rescue Association, EMO (NS), RCMP and volunteer team members represented the province. The conference explored best practices, latest trends and equipment in international search and rescue.

Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements

During 2004, EMO continued its administration of the Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements (DFAA) for several disasters which have affected the province since 1999. Of all these disasters, Hurricane Juan had the greatest impact. A total of 1,418 applications for assistance have been received for Juan and it is estimated that the program will provide $39 million in assistance to small businesses, individuals, farmers, fishers and provincial and municipal governments.

While the province was recovering from Juan, a severe blizzard in February 2004 resulted in Nova Scotia's first province-wide state of emergency. The blizzard placed a significant snow removal burden on many municipalities. In response, the province initiated a DFAA project for the incremental snow removal costs incurred by the municipal and provincial governments. It is estimated that $7 million in eligible blizzard expenses from municipalities and the provincial government could be cost-shared through DFAA.

EMO is making substantial progress in finalizing DFAA claims for Juan and other disasters. As a result, it is expected that the DFAA administration team will be scaled down in 2005. The organization has gained significant, valuable experience from managing multiple DFAA projects.

This experience has highlighted some challenges within the DFAA agreement. The province therefore welcomed the opportunity to participate in several federal/provincial/territorial meetings on the proposed changes to the DFAA policy and administration. Some of the proposed changes include the incorporation of a mitigation allowance in all DFAA funding. A lack of clarity still exists around the issues of insurability. Therefore, EMO will work with its provincial and territorial counterparts to advocate for changes to the DFAA in these and other areas.

JEPP

The Joint Emergency Preparedness Program (JEPP) cost-shares emergency preparedness activities between federal and provincial/territorial governments. The amount of funding is based on a per-capita population formula. In 2004/05, the JEPP funding envelope for Nova Scotia was $202,000. These funds were allocated to partly fund staff positions, municipal emergency preparedness projects and basic and advanced emergency training.

Staff positions included the Federal Provincial Liaison and the Training Officer at EMO headquarters. These two positions accounted for 40 per cent of the JEPP envelope. Near the end of the fiscal year, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada (PSEPC), the federal agency responsible for JEPP, came forward with additional funding to cost-share EMO's critical infrastructure planning (CIP) officer position for December 1, 2004 to March 31, 2005. Funding will continue for this position for the next fiscal year.

Training courses are an important part of EMO's emergency preparedness activities. In 2004/05, 25 per cent of JEPP funds were used to support running the emergency preparedness courses throughout the province. EMO offers courses on Basic Emergency Management (BEM), and Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) management. In response to increasing demand from municipalities for specialized emergency training, EMO offered an Emergency Public Information (EPI) course in partnership with Communications Nova Scotia (CNS). CNS is the province's full service communications agency.

As expected, the aftermath of hurricane Juan in September 2003 and a massive blizzard in February 2004 resulted in an increased demand from municipalities for generators. Municipal projects match federal dollars with municipal contributions on a 50/50 basis and accounted for 25 per cent of the JEPP budget. These projects increase emergency preparedness capacity at a municipal level. The amount available to fund municipal projects varies from year to year and the JEPP financial resources allocated to Nova Scotia are limited.

Finally, 10 per cent of the JEPP funding for 2004/05 supported the on-going development of the Nova Scotia Joint Emergency Operations Centre.

The federal government has announced that as of April 1, 2006, it will terminate JEPP cost sharing of salaries for provincial government employees. The coordination of emergency preparedness planning and the implementation of training is a responsibility of both the federal and provincial governments. JEPP cost sharing of salaries for EMO staff demonstrates the commitment of provinces, territories and the federal government to share this responsibility. The move by the federal government to eliminate cost sharing of salaries will place an undue burden on smaller provinces and territories, such as Nova Scotia, where cost-shared employees form a relatively large proportion of EMO staff.

Emergency Management Training

Throughout 2004, the demand for emergency preparedness training has continued to grow in both the public and private sectors.

In fact, demand for this training has increased to the point where we need to explore alternate avenues for delivery. We have added new training courses as well as increased the number of courses delivered to meet the needs of our clients. At the same time, we are initiating the development stages of higher-level courses for emergency management.

In the world of emergency preparedness training, the events of 2004 have created unprecedented interest in our Emergency Management Training programs.

Basic Emergency Management (BEM), features the basic concepts of emergency management using the four key components used across Canada:

- Mitigation;
- Preparedness;
- Response; and
- Recovery.

Emergency Operation Center (EOC) Management provides knowledge to enable an individual to operate effectively as a staff member during an emergency. **Emergency Public Information (EPI) Management**, explains public information principles and practices required to effectively plan for and manage media and other audiences.

Six BEM, two EOC and one EPI courses were delivered throughout the province in 2004. Two BEM courses will be delivered in the spring. In addition, 33 Nova Scotians from various levels of government attended the Canadian Emergency Preparedness College in Ottawa for advanced emergency preparedness training.

Planned for development this summer, are **Emergency Site Management (ESM)** and **Basic Emergency Management Awareness (BEMA)**. ESM will explain the fundamentals of coordinating the response at an emergency site and BEMA will provide first responders with an overview of emergency management. These courses will be available in our 2005/06 training calendar.

In other training related activities, EMO (NS) again conducted a very successful two-day conference and training session for municipal Emergency Measures Coordinators in May.

911

There were approximately 180,000 calls to 911 in the past year, 35 per cent of which were cellular. As the use of cell phones is expected to rise, Aliant, a partner with the province in the operation of the 911 System, committed to install new software on their cellular switch back in 2003. This software upgrade provides 911 Call Takers with the call back phone number of the cellular caller in addition to the currently displayed address of the cell tower. This technology is referred to as "Phase 1 Routing". Aliant completed installation of this software at all six 911 call centres in October 2004.

Rogers Wireless has also started to install the Phase 1 technology for their customers in Nova Scotia. In November 2004, Rogers initiated a trial of this technology for their cellular towers within the Halifax Regional Municipality. They expect to continue rollout for the rest of the province in 2005.

The past year has also seen many improvements to 911 civic addressing. Work has continued on the Nova Scotia Civic Address File (NSCAF) with the assistance of the municipal unit in the province. When completed, the NSCAF will provide EMO (NS) with a province-wide digital map that will include civic numbers, road names, community names, county boundaries and emergency service boundaries. Having critical information such as civic addresses in a digital format will greatly assist 911 Call Takers and emergency responders in locating emergencies . Not only will Call Takers and emergency agencies be provided with a 'snapshot' of where the emergency is taking place, but everyone will have access to the same information, lessening the possibility for confusion.

The two major phone service providers in the province are also fully participating in the NSCAF by providing vital data in order to perform more effective audits. The Civic Addressing Coordinator with EMO (NS) works very closely with Aliant and EastLink to ensure the 911 information matches the data contained within the NSCAF database.

EMO (NS) continued its partnership with the provincial department of Transportation and Public Works in the Distance Marker Program. In 2004, Highways 106, 142, 162, 105, 125, and 101 (from Kentville to Digby) were completed. These distance markers have proven to be of great assistance to both 911 callers and 911 Call Takers, in accurately determining the caller's location. These signs are posted at one kilometre intervals and contain vital information for 911 callers, such as the highway name and the direction of travel.

Our 911 Trainer was successful in providing refresher training to over 60 per cent of the Call Taking staff, surpassing our goal of 50 per cent. Call takers were offered refresher training on a number of important features of the Positron equipment and a complete review of the Standard Operating Procedures. These refresher training sessions are an excellent opportunity to review the lesser used features and also obtain feedback on the system from the Call Takers. Any suggestions for improvement from the equipment's most frequent users is considered very valuable information.

The 911 Trainer also provided Call Taker training to 18 new employees.

Members of the 911 team from EMO (NS) attended the International Association of Public Safety Communications Officials (APCO) conference in August 2004 in Montreal. This conference provided the 911 Operations Coordinator and the 911 Trainer the opportunity to attend plenary sessions on new technologies and equipment in the 911 world.

This certainly proved beneficial, as the 911 Team started planning for the replacement of the current Positron-provided 911 hardware and software. The province's contract with Positron ends in October 2006. Recognizing both the size and significance of this project, EMO (NS) hired a Project Manager in December 2004 to begin the planning process. It is expected this project will continue into the 2006/07 fiscal year.

Regional Emergency Measures Organizations (REMO)

Regional Emergency Measures Organizations (REMO) is the merging of municipal units for the purpose of managing an emergency and ensuring a coordinated, prompt response. Also, it provides for the parties to render mutual aid with respect to personnel and equipment during an emergency. This agreement provides for the joint provision of services and facilities by the municipal units within a region. The REMO consists of a Regional Emergency Measures Advisory Committee, a Regional Emergency Measures Planning Committee and the Regional Emergency Measures Coordinator.

The Advisory Committee is responsible for the direction and management of emergency preparedness activities within the region and to advise the appointing Councils pursuant to section 10(1)(d) of the *Emergency Measures Act*.

The Planning Committee is responsible for recommending policy and procedures to the Advisory Committee to maintain a reasonable state of preparedness for emergencies. The Planning Committee should consist of representatives of emergency services and other agencies that may have direct operational responsibilities in an emergency.

EMO (NS) Central Zone currently has two Regional Emergency Measures Organizations. The first consists of Colchester County, the Town of Truro and the Town of Stewiacke. We are also pleased to add Pictou County, and the towns of New Glasgow, Stellarton, Westville, Trenton and Pictou as a fully operational REMO. Discussions are presently underway with some of the municipal units in Cumberland County to examine the value of creating a REMO in their area.

Emergency Preparedness Week

Background:

EP Week began in 1995 as an annual program to build public awareness of Canada's emergency preparedness principles and emergency management system. This is accomplished through the common and collaborative efforts of governments and other organizations of the emergency preparedness community.

EP week 2004 took place May 2-8 with every province and territory participating in the event. "Prepare Now – Learn How" was the theme.

EMO (NS) made a concerted effort to increase its participation in EP Week activities. To accomplish this, a committee was formed with representatives from HRM EMO, Communications Nova Scotia, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada (PSEPC), Community Services, Red Cross, Aliant and Nova Scotia Power.

EP Week Strategy

Committee Involvement:

- EMO (NS) sent an information kit to all 55 municipalities in Nova Scotia to encourage their participation in EP Week. The kit included an introduction to this year's theme, a feature article, sample PSA, an order form for Safe Guard brochures and EMO materials, and a list of possible EP Week activities they could hold in their communities. Posters were sent to all provincial departments.

- Six feature articles on particular EP themes were developed and sent to media and other interest groups for three consecutive weeks leading up to EP Week. They were picked up 15 times by six different publications.

- A province-wide news release was issued on the Monday of EP Week to all media outlining this year's theme and events.

- A demonstration of new hazardous materials equipment was held in Parade Square in Halifax and was well covered by media.

- Ernest Fage, Minister responsible for the Emergency Measures Act, read a resolution in the Legislature on EP Week.

- EMO staff made a presentation to Nova Scotia Power in conjunction with the NAOSH Week on emergency preparedness.

- Nova Scotia Power put up posters and purchased an ad in the Truro paper's supplement.

- Nova Scotia Power ran generator safety messages.

- EP messages were posted on Aliant's intranet site. Aliant also put up posters.

- PSEPC conducted an interview with Radio-Canada. PSEPC also made a presentation to Public Works and Government Services, sent pamphlets to different departments, put messages on their website (**www.epweek.ca**) and included salutations in correspondence one month previous to EP Week.

- Red Cross had numerous activities. They had mall displays, education sessions, school presentations, skills displays and display boards. As well, an Emergency Preparedness Symposium was held with fire, police, RCMP, Hazardous Material and other emergency first responders.

Community Involvement:

At least seventeen communities participated in EP Week. Their activities include some or all of the following:

- School presentations
- Seniors group presentations
- Radio interviews
- Radio PSAs
- Newspaper articles
- Open houses
- Pamphlet distribution
- Posters
- Website information
- Equipment displays
- Mall displays
- Colouring contests
- Public information sessions
- Coordinated efforts with OHS

Plans are already underway for EP Week 2005, which will take place May 1- 7.

Interprovincial Memorandum of Understanding on Emergency Cooperation

At the Council of the Federation meeting held in February 2004, the Premiers tasked Manitoba and Nova Scotia with drafting a framework for an "Inter-provincial Emergency Management Mutual Aid Agreement". In response, EMO Nova Scotia and Manitoba proposed that an existing agreement, the International Emergency Management Compact (IMAC), be used as the basis for a Canadian mutual aid agreement on emergency management.

The IMAC model has a number of advantages as an inter-provincial agreement. It was approved by the United States Congress and therefore can be used as a cross-border agreement by individual provinces and American states. The agreement has been tested. It was effectively used for coordinating the use of mutual aid resources from New Brunswick and Maine in response to the February 2004 blizzard in Nova Scotia. It has already been approved and signed by four provinces: Quebec, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick. The Premier of Newfoundland & Labrador signed a letter of intent to sign the IMAC once enabling legislation is created by that province.

The draft framework was agreed upon by all provinces and territories and was endorsed by the Premiers at the July 2004 meeting of the Council of the Federation.

International Emergency Management Group

The International Emergency Management Group (IEMG) is comprised of the directors and designates of emergency management and emergency measures organizations from the New England states and Eastern provinces. These jurisdictions have committed to provide mutual aid in the event of a major emergency.

In February 2004, Nova Scotia had the privilege of becoming the first to utilize the IEMG agreement. We called upon the State of Maine and the Province of New Brunswick for assistance with snow plowing and removal during a major blizzard which has been since dubbed, "White Juan". Our friends in New Brunswick and Maine answered the call to assist efficiently, and in record time, due to solid MOU's with clear protocols and procedures. Snow plow operators from New Brunswick literally plowed their way to Nova Scotia on roads that were unpassable and Maine drivers were a welcome site with their "Monster" snow blowers. We are hesitant to call the response perfect, but in every sense it was.

The IEMG met in June 2004 in Charlottetown, PEI, and again in October 2004 in Groton, Connecticut, for the ongoing development of standard operating procedures and resource inventories.

For the next year the chair responsibilities will be handled by Quebec and Maine.

The next IEMG meeting is scheduled for St. John's, NL in June 2005 and the fall meeting in New Hampshire.